

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for requesting one or more machines to be maintained,
2 comprising:
3 monitoring the machine or machines;
4 detecting that a failure of at least one machine has occurred;
5 executing a computer program on an electronic terminal associated with the
6 failed machine;
7 entering data relating to the condition of the failed machine into the computer
8 program via the electronic terminal; and
9 transmitting the data to a database server, thereby initiating a process to alter
10 the condition of the failed machine.

2 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising compiling historical data
3 relating to the condition of the one or more machines using the database server.

2 3. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic terminal includes a
3 monitor and further comprising displaying screen displays having data fields.

2 4. The method of claim 1, further comprising transmitting the data to an
3 email server, thereby initiating a process to transmit an alert to a maintenance technician.

1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the alert is sent to a maintenance
2 technician's personal pager.

1 6. The method of claim 4, wherein the alert is sent to a maintenance
2 technician as an electronic mail message.

1 7. The method of claim 3 wherein at least a first of the data fields
2 includes a drop-down menu having a plurality of codes relating to potential conditions of the
3 one or more machines.

1 8. The method of claim 7 wherein entering data relating to the condition
2 of the one or more machines includes selecting a code from the drop-down menu relating to
3 the condition of the one or more machines.

- 1 9. The method of claim 3 wherein at least a second of the data fields
2 includes a text area for entering operator notes.
- 1 10. The method of claim 9 wherein entering data relating to the condition
2 of the one or more machines includes entering operator notes into the text area for entering
3 operator notes.
- 1 11. The method of claim 3 wherein the screen displays also include one or
2 more electronic buttons for use with a pointing device to initiate certain operations.
- 1 12. The method of claim 11 further comprising entering data with the
2 pointing device and selecting an electronic button, thereby initiating transmitting the data to
3 the database server.
- 1 13. The method of claim 1 wherein the machine or machines includes mail
2 processing equipment.
- 1 14. The method of claim 3 wherein at least a third one of the data fields
2 includes a drop-down menu having a plurality of codes relating to potential repair activities
3 required due to the failure of the machine.
- 1 15. The method of claim 14 further comprising selecting a code from the
2 drop-down menu relating to a repair activity required due to the failure of the machine.
- 1 16. The method of claim 3 wherein at least a fourth one of the data fields
2 includes a text area for entering information relating to the amount of time required to repair
3 the machine.
- 1 17. The method of claim 16 further comprising entering data relating to the
2 amount of time required to repair the machine into the fourth one of the data fields.
- 1 18. The method of claim 3 wherein at least a fifth one of the data fields
2 includes a text area for displaying information relating to the amount of time a repair
3 technician spends taking breaks while altering the condition of the failed machine.
- 1 19. The method of claim 18 further comprising entering information
2 relating to the amount of time spent taking breaks into the fifth one of the data fields.

1 20. A system for coordinating the maintenance of various machines at one
2 or more remote locations, comprising:
3 a database server, including a communications connection that provides
4 electronic access to one or more remote locations, including the remote locations where the
5 various machines are located, wherein the database server is configured to receive
6 information from each of the one or more remote locations relating to the condition of the
7 machine or machines at the location, wherein the database server is configured to store the
8 information electronically such that the information may be later analyzed, wherein the
9 database server is further configured such that, upon receipt of a request from a remote
10 location, the database server transmits an alert to the remote location, thereby initiating a
11 process to alter the condition of the machine.

12 21. The system of claim 20 wherein the machine includes mail processing
13 equipment.

14 22. A device for requesting one or more machines to be maintained,
15 comprising:
16 a computer, including a central processor;
17 a monitor that graphically displays a user interface having various elements
18 wherein at least a first of the various elements includes a drop-down menu having a plurality
of codes relating to potential conditions of the one or more machines;
a data entry system that responds to commands to enter data into various ones
of the elements;
a communications arrangement for electronically interfacing to a central
location, the central location being configured to electronically access one or more remote
locations, including the location where the one or more machines to be maintained is/are
located, wherein the central location is further configured to receive information from each of
the one or more remote locations relating to the condition of a machine or machines at the
location, wherein the central location is also configured to store the information electronically
such that the information may be later analyzed, wherein the central location is further
configured such that upon receipt of a request from a remote location, the central location
sends an alert to the remote location, thereby initiating a process to alter the condition of the
machine.

1 23. The device of claim 22 wherein at least a second of the various
2 elements includes a text area for entering operator notes.

1 24. The device of claim 22 wherein at least a third one of the various
2 elements includes one or more electronic buttons for use with the pointing device to initiate
3 certain operations.

1 25. The device of claim 22 wherein the machine or machines includes mail
2 processing equipment.

1 26. The device of claim 22 wherein at least a fourth one of the various
2 elements includes a drop-down menu having a plurality of codes relating to potential repair
3 activities.

1 27. The device of claim 22 wherein at least a fifth one of the various
2 elements includes a text area for entering information relating to the amount of time spent in
3 maintaining a machine.

1 28. A system for coordinating the maintenance of various machines at
2 different locations, comprising:

3 at least one machine, the maintenance of which is to be coordinated;
4 a controller associated with the machine, including a monitor and a data input
5 device, wherein the controller is configured to receive data relating to the condition of the
6 machine, and wherein the controller is further configured to transmit the data to at least a
7 second location;

8 a database server and a communications connection that provides electronic
9 access to other locations, wherein the database server is configured to receive information
10 from the controller relating to the condition of the machine or machines, wherein the database
11 server is configured to store the information electronically such that the information may be
12 later analyzed, wherein the database server is further configured such that upon receipt of a
13 request, the database server causes an alert to be transmitted to another location, thereby
14 initiating a process to alter the condition of the machine; and

15 a remote computer configured to receive the alert, wherein the remote
16 computer is further configured to relay the content of the alert to a maintenance technician.

1 29. The system of claim 28 wherein at least one machine includes mail
2 processing equipment.

1 30. The system of claim 28 wherein the remote computer comprises a
2 pager.

1 31. The system of claim 28 wherein the content of the alert is relayed to
2 the maintenance technician via an electronic email.

1 32. A system for coordinating the maintenance of one or more machines,
2 comprising:

3 first means for monitoring the one or more machines;

4 second means for detecting that a failure of at least one machine has occurred;

5 third means for compiling a message containing information relating to the
6 condition of the failed machine;

7 fourth means for causing the message to be transmitted to a remote location,
8 the remote location being configured to receive and process the message, and depending on
9 the content thereof, transmit an alert to a different location, thereby initiating a service call to
10 a maintenance technician.